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South Vietnam: Fighting continued at a steady pace over the weekend with ground battles and Communist shellings in all corps areas.

Enemy attacks are featuring renewed emphasis on rural hamlets and refugee centers. The Communists attacked a recently pacified hamlet in the delta on 21 March, killing 35 South Vietnamese and wounding 48 others. In I Corps and in the central highlands, sharp attacks were launched against a refugee holding area and several other hamlets.

Some of these terrorist raids were conducted by main force units, a departure from past Communist practice that usually left such attacks to local Viet Cong forces. Preliminary reports from II Corps indicate that the government's regional and popular force troops suffered heavier casualties than either US or South Vietnamese regular units last week because of the enemy's increased emphasis on attacking rural hamlets.

Saigon was disturbed by only minor exchanges of small-arms fire in surrounding Gia Dinh Province. Although allied operations appear to have temporarily set back enemy plans for attacks around the capital area, there are continuing indications from prisoners and captured documents that the Communists are planning another offensive surge in the near future. In addition, reports from I Corps mention enemy offensive plans that go well into April.

The Communists launched several significant actions against allied installations in II Corps. According to preliminary information, the heaviest damage occurred in Binh Dinh Province, where an attack on an ammunition depot resulted in 28 US wounded and the destruction of 359,000 artillery rounds. The enemy maintained relatively moderate pressure on military installations in I Corps. Da Nang air base received ten 122-mm. rockets, causing light damage, but Hue was quiet. [REDACTED]

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Rumania: Party and state chief Ceausescu has tightened his control of Rumanian military affairs by having himself named supreme commander of the armed forces.

Ceausescu's new title derives from the parliament's formal establishment on 13 March of the Defense Council. The council has existed at least on paper since December 1967 but seemingly has been dormant. The parliament's action may have been designed to serve several aims. With the recent Warsaw Pact summit meeting in mind, Bucharest probably intends to convey to its allies the impression that it is not neglecting military preparedness.

At the same time, however, the law governing the council contains language with strong nationalistic overtones. It refers, for example, both to the council's responsibilities in case of surprise attack and to the patriotic guards, a home militia created in the wake of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Inasmuch as centralized control over the military and the patriotic guards is assured under the council, the Rumanians may be serving notice on their allies of at least the likelihood that they will resist any invasion.

Creation of the council also introduces an additional legalistic impediment to any future approval of joint military maneuvers on Rumanian soil. The chain of command for such approval now embraces the party, state, and Defense Council, each of which Ceausescu heads.

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Communist China - Japan: Negotiations in Peking to extend the trade agreement between the two countries have bogged down over political issues.

After more than a month of talks, the Japanese and Chinese negotiators still are working out a communiqué on political affairs. The deadlock probably stems from Peking's insistence that the Japanese delegation directly condemn the "anti-China policies" of the Sato government before progress can be made in actual trade discussions.

When the Chinese made the same demand during last year's trade talks, the impasse was broken by the Japanese expressing "deep understanding" of Peking's position. The Japanese delegation also agreed to Peking's "Three Political Principles," which, among other things, enjoin Japan from impeding the normalization of diplomatic relations.

The Sato government is under considerable pressure from domestic business interests to revive the semiofficial trade mechanism, which lapsed at the end of last year. The Japanese do not, however, expect Peking to agree to more than a one-year extension of the agreement. Although an early settlement seems unlikely, the Japanese will probably ultimately accede to some formulation in the communiqué that will satisfy Peking and permit the commercial phase of the talks to begin. [REDACTED]

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Indonesia: President Suharto is consolidating his control over the army, apparently in order to centralize government authority further.

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[redacted]
[redacted] he wishes to restore primary military authority to the army general staff. In recent years, partly out of operational necessity, much authority has been assumed by regional commanders, particularly those in Java, and by Suharto's own personal military assistants. Suharto apparently sees centralization as a means toward moving against army corruption and malpractices.

With the anti-Communist security program well in hand, Suharto apparently sees a tightened army structure as a practical move both to increase his own political control and to achieve greater consistency in government administration. He is especially interested in strengthening central direction of the government's priority five-year economic development plan. Because the inefficient and inadequately trained bureaucracy is unable to administer many of the government's programs adequately, Suharto may plan to rely on army channels even more than previously.

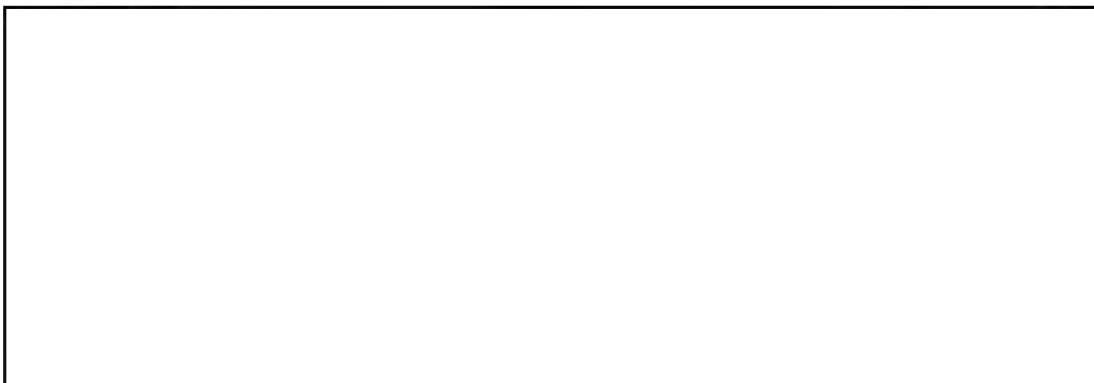
In recent months, both military and civilian elements had criticized the general staff's gradual absorption of power. This criticism has subsided, however, as it has become clear that Suharto himself is firmly behind centralization. Military and civilian officials are also pleased that the move will undercut the power of some of Suharto's personal advisers, whose interference in government they have bitterly resented.

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Equatorial Guinea: President Macias, in another abrupt switch, has rejected a moratorium on the withdrawal of Spain's 260-man civil guard proposed by UN Secretary General Thant's representative. Macias is insisting on immediate evacuation, and Madrid, which recently had been considering acceptance of the moratorium, reportedly has reverted to its earlier decision to withdraw the force. Removal of the guard, which has been an important factor in the country's tenuous stability, may lead to early new disturbances and a direct challenge to Macias' rule. 

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